

Civil Rights

Connecticut State Inter-racial Commission

Highlights of the Annual Report

1948-1949

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Civil rights

Since it was created in 1943 the Inter-racial Commission has processed over 400 complaints of discrimination (including complaints under the Fair Employment Practices Act). The past year accounted for 160 of these complaints (including 65 FEPA). The increase, we believe, is due to increased awareness of rights, not to any increase in the amount of discrimination.

Negro student nurses

Admission of Negro students to Connecticut schools of nursing has continued to increase until there are now seven such schools with Negro students. All Connecticut schools of nursing have promised equal consideration for Negro applicants.

End of National Guard segregation

At the request of Governor Bowles the 1949 legislature passed a law by unanimous vote forbidding exclusion or segregation of Negroes by the National Guard. Over 100 Negroes have enlisted. The Inter-racial Commission is cooperating with the Adjutant General to assist integration.

Public accommodations and housing

Under a new amendment to the Public Accommodations Statute complainants may use the FEPA machinery of the Inter-racial Commission to obtain relief from discriminatory practices. All public housing projects are now covered in addition to hotels, restaurants, transportation and recreation facilities.

Fair employment practices

Much of the initial resistance to the Fair Employment Practices Act of 1947 has been dissipated. In two years 125 complaints were filed. Status:

Dismissed	103
Lack of jurisdiction	1
Withdrawn by complainant	3
Under investigation	18
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	125

Disposition of dismissed complaints:

<i>Satisfactorily adjusted</i>	
Complainant employed, offered or referred for employment	33
Discriminatory practice eliminated (No individual complainant or complainant unavailable)	27
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Total satisfactorily adjusted	60
<i>No evidence of alleged discrimination</i>	43
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<i>Total dismissed</i>	103

There were no hearings or court actions. The paramount problem is to obtain initial consideration for minority workers—color to most employers is not a factor to be included in determining the order of a lay-off.

Interstate cooperation

In June 1949 representatives from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York held a conference to share experiences of the four Commissions which administer Fair Employment Practice Laws in these states. Similar conferences are to be held annually for all states and municipalities having such laws.

Court actions

Three court actions were brought in 1949 alleging violations of the Public Accommodations Statute. In Common Pleas Court in Bridgeport the manager of a roller skating rink was fined \$100 and sentenced to five days in jail for refusing skates to the Negro members of a group of students. This was the first time to our knowledge that a jail sentence was ever received for such a violation. The Commission has settled a majority of these complaints by conference methods but feels this decision may be a deterrent to persistent violators.

College admissions

In April 1949 the Inter-racial Commission published its two-year study of college admission practices based on the experiences of 1,381 graduates of Connecticut high schools. Among its significant findings was that "among graduates who ranked in the upper 30 percent of their high school classes (the superior level) the evidence is clear that Jewish and Italian origin students do not possess opportunities equal to Protestant and Catholic students in being admitted to private non-denominational colleges."

Segregation in Washington

After discussion by the Inter-racial Commission with the State Board of Education, which surveyed school principals on the problem of segregation on student trips to Washington, D. C., the State Commissioner of Education, Finis E. Engelman, issued a statement in which he said: "The State Board of Education strongly recommends that such trips be continued only when non-discriminatory arrangements as to housing, food service and transportation are made."

Community education

Requests for materials and services were received by the Inter-racial Commission from groups in 78 of Connecticut's 169 towns. The Commission supplied leadership training, consultation, printed materials, exhibits, films and recordings. The Intergroup Relations Division of the Commission filled 121 requests for speakers from organizations in 31 towns and from 8 statewide groups. A slide film illustrating the work of the Inter-racial Commission is being developed.

New Haven workshop

The fourth Connecticut Workshop in Human Relations was held for 3 weeks in June and July 1949. This workshop, conducted in cooperation with the New Haven State Teachers College, was attended by 50 participants from 11 towns. Other training programs were conducted in Bridgeport and Waterbury in co-operation with local organizations.

Mass media

Press, radio and publications were used extensively during 1948-1949.